



Holiday Stress Strategies

While the holiday season can be enjoyable and relaxing, it can also be extremely stressful. We can take practical and realistic steps to reduce stress and enjoy the holidays. Here are some tips and suggestions that could prove helpful during this holiday season.

1. Don't allow your expectations of the holidays to be dictated by magazine pictures or unrealistic scenes from movies or television. Nobody can create or sustain the picture-perfect home and family. Don't strive for the impossible – do the best you can with what you have and KNOW that it is good enough.
2. Establish a budget for holiday spending. Be realistic about what you can afford to spend on gifts, entertainment, decorations, travel, etc.
3. Remind children that the money spent doesn't determine a gift's importance. Handmade gifts such as freshly baked cookies carry a special message all their own and are appreciated by friends and relatives.
4. Creative surprises are wonderful, but asking what people want can make shopping easier. It's fun to know we're giving just what they really want.
5. Browse catalogs early, plan crafts projects, address cards while you watch TV.
6. Think about giving services rather than material gifts (i.e. work, time, babysitting, meal preparation, dog walking, foot rubbing, etc.).

7. Ask for help. If you have guests, everybody brings part of the meal – it actually makes us feel more a part of things.
8. Swap babysitting with friends to go shopping “hands-free”. Be sure to buy yourself a little present and a treat for the sitter too.
9. Find time for yourself. Take time to relax and reflect on the simple joys of the holidays. When you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed, take a break to get a better perspective.
10. Give yourself permission to drop one or two traditions or obligations this year in order to reduce stress and pressure.
11. Start new traditions that create opportunities for reflection and relaxation.
12. Decorate less than usual. Use only your most favorite decorations.
13. When serving alcoholic beverages, do not encourage or pressure guests to have “one more”. Offer alternatives to alcohol when you entertain.
14. Be healthy. Ward off the blues with good nutrition, plenty of sleep, minimal amounts of alcohol and sugar. Get plenty of fresh air and exercise. Don’t isolate in the house.
15. Don’t feel guilty if you’re not happy. Holiday depression or blues are normal and temporary.
16. Take heart- remember that the real reason for the holidays is spiritual renewal through sharing our love and faith with others.

